



Joint House Committee Hearing: Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

Angela Goodwin, CPS Director of Investigations

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The mission of the Department of Family and Protective Services is to protect children, the elderly, and people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation by involving clients, families, and communities.

- Victim typology & vulnerabilities
 - Runaways
 - Troubled youth looking to belong somewhere
 - Insufficient affection at home
 - Lack of supervision/dysfunction in the home
 - Unstable or lack of family structure
 - Drug and alcohol abuse
 - Gang membership
 - LGBT
 - Prior victim of sexual abuse

- Average age range of entry into sexual exploitation for a minor is 13-16 years old.
- One third of runaway girls (or 17% of both sexes) is approached to enter the world of sexual exploitation within 48 hours of running away.
- **Department of Justice (DOJ)** estimates that 27% of sex trafficking victims are underage.
- **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)** statistics:
 - Of 11,800 runaways reported: 20% were likely sex trafficking victims
- 20% of the nation's human trafficking victims found have been in Texas.
- El Paso and Houston in **DOJ's** list of "most intense trafficking jurisdictions in the country."

- Collaborations:
 - **Office of the Governor**
 - **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)**
 - **Texas Department of Public Safety**
 - The **Texas Attorney General** led Human Trafficking Task Force
 - The **U.S. Attorney General** led Human Trafficking Task Force
- The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with **NCMEC**.
 - Texas was only the Second State in the Nation to come to this agreement with **NCMEC**.

- Created by the House Bill 1272 during the 83rd Legislature.
- Directed the Texas Human Trafficking Task Force to develop a standardized training for education, medical professionals, and DFPS to identify trafficked victims and those vulnerable to being trafficked.

- **Train Frontline Staff:**
 - Over about 9 months, 6300 frontline DFPS staff were trained in how to recognize and respond to Human Trafficking.
 - Training Mandatory for Existing Workers .
 - Now part of Basic Caseworker Training.
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- Educate Foster Youth:
 - Youth Conference - Summers of 2014-2016 “Traps of the Trafficker”
 - Train intake staff & start tracking:
 - Statewide Intake trained intake specialist to better identify victims of sex and labor trafficking. Intake began training on human trafficking in August of 2014.
 - Effective September 1, 2015, Statewide Intake began to assess for sex trafficking and labor trafficking allegations as defined by statute and CPS policy.
 - Jurisdiction: household member or family member.
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- Co-train law enforcement:
 - CPS has worked side by side with the **Department of Public Safety** and local law enforcement to train over 1,200 patrol officers on identifying endangered children and runaways (including foster youth) during traffic stops.



- If a child in DFPS conservatorship runs from care, CPS caseworker must:
 - Notify law enforcement and other appropriate parties within 24 hours of absence from care.
 - Notify the **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.**
 - Maintain contact with law enforcement and continue efforts to locate the child for as long as the child is missing.
 - Enlist the help of a CPS Special Investigator.
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- Former law enforcement:
 - Assist on high profile cases
 - Investigate child fatalities and serious bodily injury cases
 - Conduct sensitive investigations
 - Coordinate with law enforcement
 - Attend autopsies
 - Look for families who have fled in the middle of an investigation
 - Work on specialized cases such as domestic minor sex trafficking and drug endangered children
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DFPS Special Investigators Receive National Award

- Special Investigator team:
 - Supervisor Ray Romo
 - James “Jim” Backfisch
 - Owen Hinkle
- Received the **Department of Justice’s *Missing Children’s Child Protection Award***: “Honors the extraordinary efforts of a law enforcement officers who made a significant investigative or program contribution to protect children from abuse or victimization.”



- On May 1, 2015, DFPS released a protocol for its Special Investigators regarding children absent from foster care. The protocol includes this paragraph:
 - “With law enforcement cooperation, the Special Investigator should conduct an interview with the recovered child and the person(s) who had been harboring the child. “
 - The interviews should consist of questions to determine:
 1. If any child abuse and/ or neglect occurred while the child was missing,
 2. Whether the child was trafficked,
 3. Other experiences of the child while absent from care, and
 4. The reasons why the child ran away from the care.
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- Current Operations
 - Refuge of Light
 - Freedom Place
- Expanding Capacity
 - The Refuge
 - During the DFPS Faith Leader Summit, partners interested in expanding resources to help Victims of Human Trafficking reached out to DFPS Leadership

Where Do We Go From Here?

- DFPS will continue to look for ways to better combat human trafficking.
- DFPS will continue to train our staff and other stakeholders on how to recognize and combat human trafficking.
- DFPS will continue to collaborate with law enforcement.